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4/21/10

1. TITLE: The Role of Congress in the Strategic Posture of the U.S., 1970-80

CONTRACT NUMBER

ORIGINATOR Peter Pry (NIPP); Bill Hostyn (ASCO)

2. TYPE OF MATERIAL: PAPER PRESENTATION ABSTRACT OTHER3. OVERALL CLASSIFICATION: CONTRACTOR Unclass PROJECT MANAGER UnclassA. Review authority for unclassified material is the responsibility of the PM. Your signature indicates the material has undergone technical and security review. FRD CNWDI NATO RELEASABLEB. Warning Notices/Caveats: RD SUBJECT TO EXPORT CONTROL LAWSCleared
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The Role of Congress in the Strategic Posture of the United States, 1970 - 1980

Sufficiency to PD 59

Peter Pry
National Institute for Public Policy

February 2010

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**Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Advanced Systems and Concepts Office**
Report Number ASCO 2010 005
Contract Number FA8521-07-D-0303

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The Role of Congress in the Strategic Posture of the United States, 1970-1980: Sufficiency to PD 59

Introduction

This is the second in a series of three papers to examine the role of Congress in the development of the doctrinal and material strategic posture of the United States over the three decades of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. This paper covers the 92nd through 97th Congresses, covering the period 1970-1980, corresponding roughly to the Nixon through Carter administrations.

As explained at length in the first paper, the role of Congress in building the U.S. strategic posture is underappreciated, both by historians and policymakers. Congress is especially underestimated as regards intellectual contributions to nuclear strategy and doctrine that guided development of strategic forces and plans for their employment. Yet the congressional record is a rich resource, not least for being unclassified and providing meticulous detail on debates and the thinking of the Congress, the administration, and the armed services on the ideas and concerns that shaped the U.S. strategic posture. This resource is underutilized by historians.

This paper is a modest attempt to illuminate the record on the role of Congress in the making of the strategic posture. The paper pioneers the neglected examination of the role of Congress in the development of the U.S. strategic posture, does not pretend to be a comprehensive or definitive history, but is rather an exploratory expedition and only one possible interpretation of the underutilized data available to scholars in the congressional records. The paper is primarily an intellectual history on how the ideas and thinking

prevalent in Congress affected plans and programs that became the material capabilities, and limitations, of the U.S. strategic posture. This brief history shall draw heavily from the congressional record, letting the actors speak for themselves as much as possible, to demonstrate the richness of this resource, and because it is the best way to tell the story.

The chief theme is that, during the 1970s, the policy beliefs of representatives and senators, based on their interpretations of the principles of arms control theory, dominated administration and service preferences in making the strategic posture. The subtitle of this paper—“Sufficiency to PD-59”—which is the conventional way historians of nuclear doctrine usually define this era, citing these presidential initiatives on nuclear strategy, becomes ironical when the role of Congress is understood. This paper shall demonstrate that congressional interpretations of arms control theory and support of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) agreements, and other arms control initiatives, were at least as important in shaping the U.S. strategic posture as National Security Decision Memorandum 16 (NSDM 16), National Security Decision Memorandum 242 (NSDM 242), Presidential Directive 59 (PD 59), and other presidential directives intended to guide development of the strategic posture. While technological and budgetary factors also were important determinants of the strategic posture, the focus here is on the influence of arms control theory.

Arms control theory, embraced by a majority of Congress in the 1970s, encompassed more than negotiations and treaties. Arms control theory was a strategic worldview having as core tenets the notions that nuclear weapons made classical military strategy obsolete, that “superiority” and “winning” were irrelevant in the nuclear age, and that the object of the strategic posture should be to preserve “stability” so that neither side

would believe its retaliatory nuclear capabilities were threatened or be tempted or provoked to make a nuclear first strike.¹

Further, this paper shall treat disagreements within Congress over nuclear strategy and forces, especially toward the end of the 1970s, when Soviet strategic programs and international behavior made many in Congress more skeptical of arms control and more traditionally minded on defense issues. The net effect was a Congress determined to maintain national security through better arms control in SALT II (the follow-on treaty to SALT I), which was a factor at least as important as any presidential directives in shaping the future strategic posture of the United States.

Strategic Doctrine

Throughout most of the 1970s, congressional views on strategic doctrine were dominated by arms control ideas advanced by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara during the 1960s. Congress viewed nuclear strategy chiefly in terms of the “assured destruction” doctrine introduced by McNamara, which held that it was sufficient for the United States to maintain enough survivable nuclear weapons to devastate certain percentages of the Soviet urban population and industrial base. Congressional views of nuclear strategy elevated arms control notions, introduced to Congress by McNamara, to the level of immutable strategic principles. “Stability” was the chief objective of nuclear strategy, to be achieved by avoiding “first strike” or defensive systems that could threaten Soviet retaliatory capabilities, destabilize the strategic relationship, escalate international tensions, and provoke “arms racing.”²

For many, if not a majority, of the 1970s Congress, it was axiomatic that the technology of nuclear weapons and arms racing constituted a greater objective threat than the Soviet Union. According to this view, the United States, because of its technological superiority and military innovations, was usually responsible for introducing new strategic weapons, like missile defenses and multiple-warhead missiles, that provoked the USSR into “action-reaction” cycles that popular interpretations of arms control theory predicted could eventually escalate to a nuclear war. Congress expressed more concern about controlling the nuclear arms race than competing with the Soviets.³

Congress in the 1970s was better equipped than in the past to challenge presidents and the Department of Defense on matters of nuclear strategy. Congressional staffs had an influx of experts who had served previous Democratic administrations in positions responsible for nuclear weapons and strategy and who had access to classified information. Scientists who worked on nuclear weapons and missiles, or who at least understood the complex science and technology of such weapons, migrated in large numbers to academia, and were available and often eager to advise Congress on strategic matters and serve as witnesses critical of Department of Defense policies and programs. Universities and private groups advancing arms control or anti-nuclear agendas proliferated during the 1970s and were another vocal resource with which members of Congress could make common cause.⁴

This challenging environment in Congress confronted first President Richard Nixon and his congressional Republican allies, and later Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter, when they tried to strengthen the strategic posture of the United States.

Sufficiency Doctrine

In 1968, Richard Nixon campaigned and was elected to the presidency warning of a growing “security gap” between the United States and Soviet Union in conventional and strategic forces. Nixon promised to restore U.S. strategic superiority. But an opposed Democratic Congress ideologically hostile to arms racing, stood in the way of Nixon delivering on his promise to rebuild a superior U.S. strategic posture. Even prior to Nixon’s inauguration as president, according to his national security advisor Henry Kissinger, there was a meeting of the president-elect and his top aides to discuss whether new military programs and increased defense spending could succeed in Congress. Nixon and his advisors concluded that their national security agenda could not be “bulldozed” through Congress. Congressional opposition was too powerful. Rather, according to Kissinger, President Nixon had to placate Congress by trying to sell his national security program camouflaged in terms that Congress might support.⁵

Accordingly, President Nixon tried to justify new programs to strengthen the U.S. strategic posture by calling for, not superiority, but “sufficiency.” On February 25, 1971, President Nixon explained his “sufficiency doctrine”:

I must not be—and my successors must not be—limited to the indiscriminate mass destruction of enemy civilians as the sole possible response to challenges.

It would be inconsistent with the political meaning of sufficiency to base our force planning solely on some finite—and theoretical—capacity to inflict casualties presumed to be unacceptable to the other side.

We must ensure that we have the forces and procedures that provide us with alternatives appropriate to the level and nature of the provocation. This means having the plans and the command and control capabilities necessary to enable us to select and carry out the appropriate response without necessarily having to resort to mass destruction.⁶

The sufficiency doctrine professed to provide criteria for force sizing, often correctly criticized for being vague. More importantly, sufficiency called for a range of attack options that would permit the flexible employment of nuclear force to supplement assured destruction and its focus on the mass annihilation of cities. Criteria for sufficiency initially were codified in National Security Decision Memorandum 16, a directive signed by Kissinger, which reflected Nixon's instructions after a June 1969 National Security Council (NSC) meeting. Four criteria are described in NSDM 16: "1. Maintain high confidence that our second strike capability is sufficient to deter an all-out surprise attack on our strategic forces. 2. Maintain forces to insure that the Soviet Union would have no incentive to strike the United States first in a crisis. 3. Maintain the capability to deny to the Soviet Union the ability to cause significantly more deaths and industrial damage in the United States in a nuclear war than they themselves would suffer. 4. Deploy defenses which limit damage from small attacks or accidental launches to a low level."⁷

According to Kissinger, the sufficiency doctrine was crafted, including its ambiguous name, to minimize opposition from Congress. Nixon's political base and campaign supported U.S. strategic superiority. On Kissinger's advice, President Nixon's new strategic doctrine was named "sufficiency" deliberately to appeal to Congress.⁸ Likewise, the objectives of sufficiency were described in terms more likely to appeal, or be least offensive, to the rank and file of Congress, many of whom were not well schooled in the conceptual details of arms control theory and assured destruction. Sufficiency doctrine did not put front and center a call for new strategic programs, but rather focused mostly on maintaining stability, providing flexibility and reasonable

alternatives to assured destruction, and quietly suggested that new strategic programs and improved capabilities were needed to achieve these ends.

Congressional leaders and activist members who specialized in strategic issues nevertheless opposed the sufficiency doctrine. For example, at a 1970 hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) Subcommittee on Arms Control, International Law and Organization, McGeorge Bundy, former national security advisor to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson and a veteran of the Cuban missile crisis, was invited by Chairman Albert Gore, Sr. to critique the new doctrine. Bundy warned a sympathetic audience, that included Senators Frank Church and Claiborne Pell, that sufficiency concealed a doctrine of strategic superiority:

There is a particular danger in the uncritical acceptance of doctrines of strategic superiority—or even sufficiency—which may be used by zealous men in support of their own preferred weapons. This is as true of the Eisenhower administration’s belief in “prevailing” as it is of later doctrines. ...At present there are four new criteria of strategic sufficiency, but the Administration has not told us what they are. According to press reports, these criteria include “assured destruction,” “hostage equality,” “crisis stability,” and “third country protection.” If the administration and the Congress are not alert and watchful, criteria like these can be protective umbrellas for unchecked strategic expansionism. They can also be roadblocks in the way of arms limitation. ...My own conviction is that the realities of strategic nuclear weapons are not subject to control by such verbal formulae. In the language of Justice Holmes, I believe that criteria like these tend to be spiders’ webs inadequate to control the dominant facts.⁹

Congress held a series of hearings on strategic systems needed by the Nixon administration to implement its sufficiency doctrine, notably MIRVs and ABM defense. Multiple independently-targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs), according to proponents, could be used to saturate Soviet missile defenses, thereby ensuring the effectiveness of the U.S. retaliatory force and promoting a stable nuclear balance. MIRVs permitted the

United States to limit the number of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), without compromising its retaliatory capabilities. MIRVs would increase the survivability of U.S. retaliatory capabilities by making each missile surviving a Soviet first strike capable of retaliating against a number of separate targets.¹⁰ The Safeguard anti-ballistic missile (ABM) system would protect U.S. ICBMs and shield against accidental or small-scale nuclear attacks, thereby strengthening the U.S. deterrent and introducing more strategic flexibility, argued supporters of the system.

Senator Edward Brooke, one of the Senate's most vocal anti-nuclear and arms control advocates, was featured as the first witness in the hearings, to denounce arms racing and nuclear weapons as the biggest threat to U.S. security. Senator Brooke appealed for support of his Senate Resolution 211, that would freeze development and testing of MIRV because “it is positively hostile to the prospects for strategic stability...or explicit arms limitations.” According to Senator Brooke, MIRV was dangerous because it threatened the USSR’s retaliatory capabilities and thereby the strategic stability provided by “mutual assured destruction” (or “MAD”):

As President Nixon has so forthrightly said, the security of the United States and the Soviet Union rest today on mutual deterrence. Neither side could rationally attack the other because neither side has the capacity to prevent devastating retaliation by the victim. This capacity to retaliate—to visit assured destruction on any nation which might launch a nuclear war—is the foundation of credible deterrence. ...Developments which seem to jeopardize either side’s deterrent erode strategic stability and induce changes in the force postures of both sides.¹¹

Senator Albert Gore, Sr., chairman of the subcommittee conducting the hearings, strongly concurred with Senator Brooke: “I want to observe that those who argue now that the deployment of ABM and MIRV would add to the security of the United States could in my opinion make identically the same arguments that it would add to our

security to somehow renounce the atmospheric test ban and resume testing in the atmosphere so we could have bigger and better bombs.”¹² Congress mostly challenged the intellectual legitimacy of the sufficiency doctrine and condemned it as leading to an acceleration of the arms race.

President Nixon tried hard to sell the sufficiency doctrine on Capitol Hill. Beginning in February 1970, the White House sent a series of national security reports to Congress promoting the importance of strategic flexibility and programs for both national security and arms control objectives. The Nixon administration promised that sufficiency was a path away from the Cold War and toward détente, and perhaps eventual normalcy, in relations with the Soviet Union. Even the titles of the reports were designed to reinforce this message: *A New Strategy for Peace* (1970), *Building for Peace* (1971), *The Emerging Structure of Peace* (1972), and *Shaping a Durable Peace* (1973).¹³

President Nixon’s congressional allies also endeavored to sell the sufficiency doctrine on the Hill. For example, in a 1972 hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), Senator Henry Jackson featured as a witness Dr. William Van Cleave. Van Cleave was a former advisor to the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks—an arms control initiative universally respected in Congress and regarded by Nixon’s congressional opponents as the single most important national security effort of the day. Van Cleave enunciated a sophisticated strategic rationale for increased targeting flexibility and improved strategic capabilities:

SENATOR JACKSON: Should the President be left with the single option of striking Soviet cities with submarine-launched missiles in the event that the U.S. land-based deterrent is destroyed in a Soviet first strike?

DR. VAN CLEAVE: I think that would be an intolerable situation.

The President himself has said that. Further, I wouldn't expect the President to exercise that option if that were his only option available.

SENATOR JACKSON: What other options should be available to him if we are going to have a sound strategic policy?

DR. VAN CLEAVE: It seems to me we have to have the options of conducting limited strategic operations, particularly counterforce and of limiting damage to ourselves in a significant way, and I think we ought to look very seriously again at our position on defense, including civil defense. I think we ought to look very seriously at the capabilities we have for rapid force reprogramming and retargeting and for the ability to conduct timely counterforce operations: and, furthermore, I don't think that doing that, contrary to existing majority opinion, would create a more destabilizing situation in our strategic relationships with the Soviet Union. It is quite clear to me that is the way they are going. I don't see that anything they have done in the last 5 years suggests otherwise.¹⁴

Two years later, in 1974, Van Cleave's same arguments would be presented again to Congress by Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger to justify a new presidential directive, National Security Decision Memorandum 242, and be deemed the "Schlesinger doctrine." Yet the intellectual fundamentals of NSDM 242 and the Schlesinger doctrine had already largely been worked out earlier by others laboring on U.S. nuclear weapons policy and strategy.

During the early 1970s, Henry Kissinger worked with the National Security Council staff to develop new limited strategic options. Later, the Defense Department conducted its own study of incorporating greater flexibility into nuclear war plans for its own reasons, not just in response to direction from the White House.¹⁵ These would become the operational basis for the strategic flexibility sought in the sufficiency doctrine. However, according to historian Lawrence Freedman, progress on the limited strategic options stopped in 1972 when a press leak about this project attracted criticism from the Senate. In 1972, President Nixon was running for a second term against

Democratic candidate Senator George McGovern, one of the leaders of congressional opposition to Nixon's strategic designs. Senator McGovern was an outspoken proponent of arms control, adamantly opposed to strategic plans and programs, like limited strategic options, that according to arms control theory could be destabilizing. Nixon wanted his reelection bid to focus on his arms control achievements, the ABM Treaty and SALT agreement. In June 1972, President Nixon sent a letter to the Senate Armed Services Committee asking for ratification of both, partially on the grounds that they signified Soviet acceptance of arms control principles to contain future strategic competition, and could become a basis for future arms control negotiations that might replace the Cold War with détente. Kissinger communicated the same message to Congress in his testimony, pushing controversy over the limited strategic options, the development of which was now languishing, off the front page.¹⁶

Consequently, the limited strategic options were not operationalized until after the 1972 elections that returned President Nixon to a second term.

NSDM 242

On January 17, 1974, President Nixon signed National Security Decision Memorandum 242, "Policy for Planning the Employment of Nuclear Weapons." NSDM 242 officially directed the further development and adoption of limited strategic options that had already been underway since the president's first term. The then-Top Secret directive, under the section "Planning Limited Nuclear Employment Options," stated:

Should conflict occur, the most critical employment objective is to seek early war termination, on terms acceptable to the United States and its allies, at the lowest level of conflict feasible. The objective requires planning a wide range of limited nuclear employment options which could be used in conjunction with supporting political and military

measures (including conventional forces) to control escalation.

Plans should be developed for limited employment options which enable the United States to conduct selected nuclear operations....

...options should be developed in which the level, scope, and duration of violence is limited in a manner which can be clearly and credibly communicated to the enemy. The options should (a) hold some vital enemy targets hostage to subsequent destruction by survivable nuclear forces, and (b) permit control over the timing and pace of attack execution, in order to provide the enemy opportunity to reconsider his actions.¹⁷

Secretary of Defense Schlesinger publicly announced NSDM 242 early in 1974.

Schlesinger's explanations of the new directive included the idea of "essential equivalence," a concept, according to Lawrence Freedman, "which Congressmen and diplomats could readily understand"¹⁸ and which appeared crafted to gain appeal through its seemingly unassailable simplicity and fairness and to avoid the implication that the United States was seeking new strategic capabilities in order to achieve strategic superiority. The goal, said Schlesinger, was for "a range and magnitude of capabilities such that everyone—friend, foe, and domestic audiences alike—will perceive that we are the equal of the strongest of our competitors."¹⁹

NSDM 242 came to be called the "Schlesinger doctrine" because the defense secretary was its chief salesman to Congress. Events in the White House both strengthened the case and weakened the cause for implementing the controversial doctrine.

President Nixon resigned in early August 1974 to avoid impeachment by Congress, and was replaced by his vice president, Gerald Ford. After pressuring Nixon to resign, and now facing his vice president become president, the Congress expected to

play a more influential, perhaps dominant, role in the making of national security policy, not least on implementation of the Schlesinger doctrine.

Almost coincident with the resignation of President Nixon, a Top Secret report, “Soviet and PRC Reactions to U.S. Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy,” by the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), William Colby, was provided to the president, as required by NSDM 242. The report ratified the judgments of NSDM 242 by concluding that the Soviets were also developing nuclear strike options: “Soviet military planners began as early as 1970 to examine possible options for the limited or selective employment of nuclear weapons. ...Current Soviet military posture provides some capabilities for limited employment of nuclear weapons at theater and intercontinental levels.”²⁰ According to the report, as the Soviets modernized their nuclear forces, their flexibility would increase: “Over the next ten years, evolving Soviet doctrine and projected force improvements will permit improved plans and capabilities for some kinds of limited nuclear operations.”²¹ A logical inference from this was the need to modernize and make more flexible the U.S. strategic posture. The report, unavailable to scholars until partially declassified in 2004, provided evidence of Soviet interest in limited strategic operations and of the need for improved strategic capabilities to implement NSDM 242.²²

Congress was mostly suspicious and highly critical of the Schlesinger doctrine. In 1974, the Subcommittee on Arms Control of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee convened a hearing, classified Secret, to cross-examine Secretary Schlesinger on NSDM 242. A letter from Senator Clifford Case to the secretary of defense, that is included as part of the official record as the justification for the hearing, makes clear the SFRC

subcommittee had already condemned in advance NSDM 242. The Case letter disagreed that counterforce attacks (strikes against enemy strategic nuclear forces) could keep U.S. casualties low in a nuclear war, and therefore rejected as unnecessary and expensive new strategic capabilities for counterforce attacks. The Case letter lectured the secretary of defense that, “Mutual assured destruction, while an undesirable alternative to mutual disarmament, has been the rock upon which we have built our security. I am not inclined to risk tampering with this concept that has kept the nuclear peace without the fullest possible public debate of *all* the consequences of the limited nuclear war you seem to have postulated.”²³

At the hearing, Secretary Schlesinger endeavored to persuade senators of the wisdom of NSDM 242. He explained the insufficiency of assured destruction against cities, that a more likely Soviet nuclear attack would be limited and on U.S. strategic forces, would hold U.S. cities hostage, and so would render the U.S. assured destruction retaliatory threat not credible.²⁴

Schlesinger described some limited nuclear war scenarios that the Soviets could pursue that would destroy vitally important elements of the U.S. strategic force, while limiting civilian casualties to a small percentage of the total U.S. population. Secretary Schlesinger presented tables and graphs to support Department of Defense calculations.

According to those calculations, the USSR could make a limited nuclear attack on U.S. ballistic missile submarine bases that would destroy two-thirds of the submarines in port. This would eliminate most U.S. strategic missile warheads. The attack would limit collateral fatalities from all nuclear effects, including fallout, to about 100,000

Americans.²⁵ This was less than one percent of the total national population at the time (213,800,000 people in 1974).

At the Senate hearing, Schlesinger also described a Soviet nuclear attack limited to all 45 U.S. strategic bomber bases, that would destroy the unalerted bomber force, comprising 75 percent of all U.S. strategic bombers. Department of Defense calculations found that such an attack would kill 300,000 people and produce total casualties, killed and injured, of about 700,000.²⁶ So destroying most of the submarine and bomber legs of the strategic triad, that carried collectively more than two-thirds of all U.S. strategic nuclear weapons, could be accomplished while inflicting 400,000 deaths on U.S. civilians, still well below one percent of the total population.

The Schlesinger briefing also considered a Soviet nuclear attack limited to U.S. ICBMs, with the Soviet warheads air burst to avoid fallout. Defense Department calculations found that such a Soviet attack could destroy the ICBM leg of the strategic triad at a cost of 800,000 American dead, and total casualties, dead and injured, amounting to about 1.5 million. If Soviet warheads were ground burst against U.S. ICBMs to produce fallout, “it would drive the number of fatalities or casualties to a significantly higher level, something on the order of 3 million.”²⁷

The briefing demonstrated that a Soviet counterforce attack on all three legs of the U.S. triad—submarines in port, bombers, and ICBMs—could be accomplished while limiting U.S. civilian fatalities to about 1-3 million, at most about one percent of the total population. Schlesinger contrasted this with the 95-100 million American dead expected from an assured destruction type of attack that deliberately targeted cities.²⁸

Schlesinger argued that, while nuclear war is unlikely, these limited nuclear scenarios were far more likely than a Soviet all-out attack on U.S. cities. The Department of Defense calculations, according to Schlesinger, proved that assured destruction alone was an inadequate basis for deterrence, and so NSDM 242 was needed.²⁹ The United States needed capabilities for limited strategic options to be able respond in a credible manner to less than all-out Soviet strikes and thus deter such attacks.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, however, was unpersuaded and hostile to Schlesinger's defense of NSDM 242. Senator Case argued that 800,000 U.S. fatalities would warrant an assured destruction response by the United States: "It is not conceivable to me that that would not be regarded by the United States as the kind of attack which required all-out response."³⁰ Senator Edmund Muskie claimed that Schlesinger's pursuit of flexibility and counterforce capabilities to implement NSDM 242 would look, to the Soviets, like striving after a first-strike capability, and would make nuclear war more likely.³¹ Senator Muskie defended continued reliance on assured destruction and declared limited nuclear options as dangerous:

SENATOR MUSKIE: What concerns me is that in building these limited responses we cloak the possibility of massive exchanges, whereas if we are going to continue to rely on the doctrine of massive retaliation, then that possibility should always be clear and evident or we abandon it for something else. ...If we add evidence to our doubts about our willingness to go the full route, it seems to me we add assurance to the other side's belief that we will be self-deterring. ...Therefore, you encourage the development of limited warfare as an acceptable kind of conventional military involvement. And when you escalate the possibilities to that level, it seems to me you escalate the possibility for ultimate nuclear war.³²

Senator Muskie also challenged the veracity of Secretary Schlesinger's technical analysis of U.S. casualties likely from Soviet counterforce attacks. Senator Muskie cited a study from the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) that concluded, "The

urban casualties can range from 145,000 to 50 million for two one-megaton warheads arriving at each Minuteman silo.”³³ The Defense Department subsequently submitted a report for the congressional record rebutting the ACDA analysis.³⁴ Nonetheless, in contrast to the 1960s, Congress in the 1970s was less dependent on the Department of Defense for facts, and had a broader range of analytical resources and technically competent allies to help it make the case for its views on the strategic posture.

Not a single senator at the hearing spoke to support Secretary of Defense Schlesinger or the changes associated with NSDM 242.

PD 59

President Jimmy Carter’s administration (1977-1981) witnessed a sea change in the attitudes of Congress toward strategic matters. Bipartisan skepticism of arms control rose because of concern about a growing Soviet military threat. By the late 1970s, many in Congress believed that arms control had failed. SALT did not arrest a steady buildup of Soviet strategic forces with growing counterforce capabilities. MIRVing of Soviet strategic missiles threatened to open a “window of vulnerability” for the U.S. strategic triad by the early-to-mid 1980s. U.S. submarines in port, bombers, and ICBMs were all threatened; for many, Schlesinger’s 1974 Secret briefing for the Senate now seemed prescient. Arms control and its promise of détente seemed betrayed by Soviet intervention in the Third World, culminating in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979.

By the late 1970s a new conservatism was not yet dominant in Congress. But more balance was restored to the debate on the Hill between advocates of “peace through

strength” and those proponents of arms control who viewed nuclear weapons themselves as the primary threat.

The Carter administration responded to the growing Soviet strategic threat with a series of presidential directives intended to advance the agenda of NSDM 242 by introducing more flexibility into the U.S. strategic posture.

Presidential Directive 18 (PD 18), signed by President Carter in August 1977, ordered “a review of U.S. targeting policy” and said that until the review was completed, the United States would “continue to employ its strategic forces according to NSDM 242.”³⁵ Issued a year later, Presidential Directive 41 (PD 41), entitled “Civil Defense Policy,” called for planning to relocate U.S. urban populations to enhance their survival in the event of nuclear war. But neither the Carter administration nor Congress was enthusiastic about civil defense because of general skepticism about its effectiveness and because of belief, as promulgated under arms control theory, that civil defense, like missile defenses, could destabilize the strategic nuclear balance. Increased funding for civil defense was prevented by Congress.³⁶

President Carter’s Presidential Directive 53 (PD 53) of November 1979 ordered improvements in the robustness and survivability of telecommunications to ensure continuity of government because “a survivable communications system is a necessary component of our deterrent posture for defense.” Robust telecommunications were necessary for directing military forces and nuclear operations to achieve the flexibility advocated by NSDM 242. PD 53 stated:

...the nation’s telecommunications must provide for [inter alia]....[r]esponsive support for operational control of the armed forces, even during a protracted nuclear conflict...[c]ontinuity of government during or after a nuclear war or natural disaster...[and] [r]ecover of the nation

during and after a nuclear war or natural disaster.³⁷

The Carter administration did not, however, represent simple continuity with the Nixon through Ford administrations on strategic doctrine. President Carter was committed to arms control, despite evidence of its limitations. Where Nixon used arms control to sell a hostile Congress on new strategic doctrine and modernization programs, Carter used new strategic doctrine and programs to sell SALT II to a Congress more worried about the Soviet threat and less enamored of arms control. Nixon was more successful in achieving arms control agreements than in gaining congressional support for the strategic force modernization programs that were necessary to implement new strategic doctrine calling for increased and more varied strike options. In particular, the Nixon administration failed to develop counterforce ICBM capabilities that could balance the growing Soviet counterforce threat to U.S. ICBMs, and failed to deploy active or passive defenses to ensure the survivability of U.S. ICBMs from a Soviet first strike. On the other hand, Nixon's ABM Treaty and SALT I agreement made the arms control process at least as important as presidential directives in shaping the U.S. strategic posture, which by the late 1970s appeared increasingly vulnerable to a Soviet nuclear attack. Nonetheless, while many in Congress were now skeptical of arms control, President Carter hoped for a crowning achievement in arms control—ratification by the Senate of the SALT II Treaty.

Despite President Carter's support of arms control and ideological kinship with his allies in Congress, who had criticized the Nixon and Ford administrations over the sufficiency doctrine and NSDM 242, Carter received no better treatment for the "countervailing strategy" approved in his Presidential Directive 59 (PD 59). PD 59 was

the result of the targeting review initiated by PD 18. Issued in July 1980, PD 59 provoked bitter opposition from his own allies in Congress.

Presidential Directive 59 called for development of nuclear strike options against the Soviet political and military leadership, against their military forces, and against war-supporting industries, as Secretary of Defense Harold Brown testified in September 1980 before a classified session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.³⁸ Sounding in many ways similar to NSDM 242, the Carter administration's PD 59 required the United States to prepare for "fighting successfully" a nuclear war so as to prevent "any adversary" from achieving "victory" and called for improved U.S. plans and forces to achieve "a high degree of flexibility, enduring survivability, and adequate performance."

The directive said that,

To continue to deter in an era of strategic nuclear equivalence, it is necessary to have nuclear (as well as conventional) forces such that in considering aggression against our interests any adversary would recognize that no plausible outcome would represent a victory on any plausible definition of victory. To this end and so as to preserve the possibility of bargaining effectively to terminate the war on acceptable terms that are as favorable as practical, if deterrence fails initially, we must be capable of fighting successfully so that the adversary would not achieve his war aims and would suffer costs that are unacceptable or in any event greater than his gains, from having initiated an attack.

...These requirements form the broad outline of our evolving countervailing strategy. To meet these requirements, improvements should be made to our forces, their supporting C3 [command, control, and communications] and intelligence, and their employment plans and planning apparatus, to achieve a high degree of flexibility, enduring survivability, and adequate performance in the face of enemy actions.³⁹

Secretary of Defense Brown tried to persuade those in Congress hostile to PD 59 to support strategic programs needed to implement the directive, on the grounds that the Carter administration still subscribed to assured destruction. Brown told the Senate that

the Carter administration was not taking steps to shelter the general population from a nuclear war, as if this were a virtue, and despite the administration's failed attempt to secure congressional funding for civil defense planning to relocate and protect urban populations from nuclear attack.⁴⁰ The year before PD 59, in 1979, Secretary Brown had reaffirmed to Congress that assured destruction was the basis for U.S. strategic planning.⁴¹ In retrospect, given the commitment of so many in Congress, especially from President Carter's own party, to assured destruction, it seems possible that Secretary Brown's reaffirmation to Congress that assured destruction was the basis for U.S. strategy was intended to preempt criticism of PD 59, which was then in the works.

At the September 1980 SFRC hearing on PD 59, Secretary Brown and Secretary of State Edmund Muskie both went to great lengths to reassure congressional allies that the directive did not repudiate, but merely complemented, assured destruction, and that it also complemented arms control initiatives, particularly SALT II:

SECRETARY MUSKIE: ...the countervailing strategy is not a radical departure from previous policy. It is rather the result of a gradual evolution of our doctrine over a period of years in response to changing conditions and new knowledge. The credible capacity to devastate the Soviet Union under any circumstances remains its cornerstone. Thus, we will continue to include the full spectrum of political and military as well as urban-industrial targets in our planning.

Presidential Directive 59 does not signify a shift to a warfighting strategy nor to a first strike doctrine. ...I need hardly add that we do not regard the countervailing strategy as in any way a substitute for arms control or as a symptom of disenchantment with the arms control process. On the contrary, the countervailing strategy is fully consistent with the SALT II Treaty and our longer term arms control objectives.

SECRETARY BROWN: I have testified extensively before this committee, and others, on our strategic forces themselves and on arms control, most particularly during the thorough and searching hearings you conducted on the SALT II Treaty last year. My conviction that SALT II serves and advances our national security interests remains intact and its ratification at the earliest

feasible time is still very important.

Today we are here to examine the third of the three requirements for strategic nuclear stability, our strategy itself....

The United States has never had a doctrine based simply and solely on reflexive, massive attacks on Soviet cities and population. We have always planned both more selectively—options limiting urban-industrial damage, and more comprehensively—a range of military targets.

Previous administrations, going back almost two decades, recognized the inadequacy of a strategic doctrine that would give us too narrow a range of options. ...The fundamental premises of our countervailing strategy today are a natural evolution of the conceptual foundation built over a generation by men like Robert McNamara and James Schlesinger.⁴²

Even before PD 59, Congress anticipated and was already fighting over the direction the Carter administration was going with strategic doctrine. For example, in July 1979 hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Jacob Javits supported President Carter's strategic plans and programs, criticizing them only for not moving far or fast enough to protect against a Soviet first strike and nuclear blackmail:

If the Soviets undertook a first strike, we would be left powerless except to direct our counterattack at industrial centers, as well as some military and control targets, and no American President would undertake that. ...You do not have to make the last move and wipe your opponent from the chess board when you are masters. ...This is what we talk about when we talk about the “Finlandization” of Europe and when we talk about nuclear blackmail and when we talk about the tendency of many countries in the world to opt with whom they think is going to be the winner....⁴³

Senator Javits was representative of a growing number in Congress who saw arms control as a failure. Javits thought the promise of arms control had misled the Congress into constraining U.S. strategic modernization while the USSR surged forward, and believed that, contrary to views of many arms control proponents, the Soviets did not subscribe to assured destruction, stability, or détente. “We have goofed off for at least

ten years. ...It is we—all of us,” Javits declared, “It is the administration, the Congress, all of us. Our perceptions of this thing obviously have been wrong. ...Is there not also a new concept in that we have relied on mutual deterrence and we know the Soviets do not? They rely on winning an all-out war. We are somewhat revising our concept also...”⁴⁴ Agreeing with Javits, Senator Church, the SFRC chairman, blamed the Nixon administration for the Soviet strategic threat:

One of the reasons we may not have done enough during that period, which has not yet been mentioned, is that we were deeply involved in a futile and foolish war in Southeast Asia, which consumed an enormous amount of the resources of this country.⁴⁵

However, the champions of arms control and assured destruction, still powerful if not dominant in Congress, were equally adamant against moving in the direction that would become PD 59. For example, Senator Pell, at the same July 1979 SFRC hearing on the military implications of SALT II, argued for continued reliance on assured destruction and dismissed limited strategic options, declaring that “the second strike would just make the rubble bounce.”⁴⁶ Pell described the horrors of nuclear war, wondering, “What would be the effect, genetically and radioactively, upon the world if there were a full exchange of all weapons presently in our arsenal?” A National Academy of Sciences report on nuclear war that had been requested by the SFRC concluded, according to Chairman Church, that, “If anyone survived, our standards would be reduced to medieval times.” The report was inserted into the congressional record.⁴⁷

Senator McGovern agreed with Pell and attacked the march toward PD 59:

I see this as a terrifying change in our policy. When we move from deterrence to this so-called flexible response, I think we are talking about moving to a nuclear war fighting capability and lowering the

threshold at which leaders may be tempted to use these weapons.⁴⁸

President Carter's most important initiatives in both arms control—SALT II—and strategic doctrine—PD 59—went unfinished during his administration. The president withdrew the SALT II Treaty from the Senate ratification process in January 1980, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, fearing Senate rejection of the agreement. (The complexities of the SALT II ratification debate have been well-covered elsewhere.)⁴⁹ Battles over the Reagan administration's variations on PD 59 and the strategic programs to support flexible options would continue into the 1980s.

Strategic Forces

Successive administrations and Congress also struggled over the force programs intended to implement strategic doctrine. Presidents Nixon, Ford, and to a lesser extent, Carter, fought for nuclear forces that could offer alternatives to assured destruction, to provide the president with strategic flexibility, and not merely the stark choice of suicide or surrender. A highly accurate MIRVed ICBM in a survivable basing mode—specifically the MX missile—epitomized the offensive system having all of the characteristics called for by sufficiency, NSDM 242, and PD 59. In particular, MX warheads offered a yield-accuracy combination for destroying hard targets (missile silos and command bunkers, for example), and for counterforce strikes and limited nuclear operations designed to reduce collateral damage to the civilian population.

Strategic missile defense, the Safeguard ABM system, also objectively could have advanced the goals of sufficiency, NSDM 242, and PD 59 by lessening reliance on

assured destruction and increasing strategic flexibility. Missile defenses could have enhanced the survivability of the U.S. deterrent, reducing pressure to respond massively at the first sign of an attack. Safeguard also promised a way to cope with small-scale missile attacks on U.S. forces or population by China or Russia, or with small accidental or unauthorized attacks, that might involve only a single missile.

In contrast, throughout most of the 1970s, the majority in Congress were proponents of assured destruction and strongly opposed any strategic forces that violated the stability principles of arms control theory, as understood by Congress. In this view, strategic offensive forces should not be designed to threaten the survivability of adversary retaliatory forces in a counterforce attack, and should themselves be highly survivable. For example, the Trident I submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) was ideal for assured destruction because of its high survivability, being able to hide in the ocean vastness. Equally important, Trident I offered warheads of such yield and accuracy as to be inadequate for counterforce attacks against enemy hard targets, more suitable for attacking urban-industrial centers targeted by assured destruction.

At least until 1969, the Department of Defense encouraged Congress in its view of accurate MIRVed missiles as destabilizing counterforce and first-strike weapons. An August 30, 1969 letter from the director of defense research and engineering, Dr. John Foster—entered into the congressional record by Senator Brooke as a commitment from the department—reassured Congress that the United States, in contrast to the USSR, was deliberately not designing its MIRVs for killing hard targets or striking first. Foster wrote,

I should emphasize here a significant point. Our own MIRV systems are not efficient against missile silos; they are designed for, and

intended for use against defended urban/industrial type targets. They are not “first strike” weapons.⁵⁰

Likewise, strategic defenses, like Safeguard, were perceived by the 1970s Congress as potentially destabilizing. Anti-ballistic missile defenses could encourage offensive and defensive arms racing that would elevate international tensions, eventually erode the confidence of one or both sides in their retaliatory capabilities, and so undermine the mutual hostage relationship thought to be the foundation of strategic stability.

Moreover, throughout most of the 1970s, Congress predominantly viewed as undesirable any strategic program that might move Moscow to abandon arms control negotiations, or might complicate negotiations and endanger agreement on a prospective treaty. Most in the Congress of the 1970s started the decade with high hopes that the arms control process of negotiation and agreement could build trust between the United States and Soviet Union, replace the Cold War with détente, and perhaps eventually replace mutual assured destruction with a U.S.-USSR relationship resembling normalcy. In this view, in the near term, deterrence could be maintained at much lower nuclear force levels, while arms control and détente were strategically more promising and more important than deterrence in the long run.⁵¹

Congress in mid-decade gave itself a new tool to influence the Department of Defense on programs related to the strategic posture. In 1975, Congress amended the Arms Control and Disarmament Act to require the executive branch to submit to Congress “Arms Control Impact Statements” (ACIS) that evaluated the compliance of ongoing U.S. strategic programs with existing arms control treaties, evaluated the consistency of programs with treaties in prospect, and directed oversight by Congress to

enforce compliance with the impact statements. The avowed purpose of the statements was to strengthen the hand of Congress. According to legislation establishing ACIS, it had “two objectives: to improve executive branch decision making with respect to the military and arms control components of national security policy; and to strengthen and enhance meaningful congressional participation in those decisions.”⁵² The ACIS requirement was a means of compelling the executive branch to take account of the arms control views and expectations of Congress while strategic programs were under development. Nor was ACIS without teeth. In 1979, Congress withheld funding for a Navy tactical nuclear missile, in the words of a Senate Armed Services Committee report, “because the request was not accompanied by an arms control impact statement as required by law.”⁵³

The bottom line is that, during the 1970s, Congress prevailed decisively over the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations in shaping the strategic posture of the United States. Congress succeeded in greatly limiting and then canceling U.S. strategic missile defenses, so by the late 1970s the U.S. posture was based entirely on strategic offensive systems, to deter a Soviet Union having both strategic offensive and defensive systems. Congress during the 1970s succeeded in denying to the United States a highly effective, prompt, and flexible counterforce capability by delaying until the next decade MX missile deployment, and then in much smaller numbers than originally planned. The U.S. strategic posture at the end of the 1970s—no strategic anti-missile defenses, very limited prompt counterforce capability among U.S. ICBMs, and reliance on highly survivable SLBMs suited for assured destruction—looked very much like the posture preferred by a Congress swayed by arms control theory at the beginning of the decade. Where the

Department of Defense and the White House won, for example in MX not being canceled entirely, it was primarily because Congress became increasingly alarmed about the Soviet threat by the late 1970s and many regretted their earlier decisions.⁵⁴ So the stage was set for President Ronald Reagan and a more conservative Congress to attempt rebuilding the U.S. strategic posture in the 1980s.

The “score” during the 1970s between Congress and the White House on particular strategic programs is described in more detail below.

Safeguard Missile Defense

Safeguard was preceded by the Nike-Zeus anti-ballistic missile program, that envisioned protecting the population of the United States from Soviet nuclear missile attack. However, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara rejected a nationwide ABM defense of U.S. cities as impractical and destabilizing under arms control theory. Nike-Zeus was replaced with Sentinel, that still sought to protect U.S. cities, but from a light, unsophisticated ICBM attack such as China might deliver. In March 1969, President Nixon redirected the ABM program away from population defense and toward a phased deployment for protecting U.S. strategic forces, particularly the Minuteman ICBM, and the National Command Authority in Washington. This system, Safeguard, retained the mission of defending U.S. cities against an ICBM attack from China, other small-scale attacks, and accidental missile launches.⁵⁵

Safeguard was highly controversial and, despite the strong commitment of its congressional champions, never enjoyed broad support in Congress.⁵⁶ Congress conducted a “great debate” on Safeguard in 1969 and 1970, centering on the technical viability of the system and its arms control implications.⁵⁷ In August 1969, various

amendments to prohibit deployment of Safeguard were defeated by one or a few votes.⁵⁸

In 1969, the Senate approved deployment of Safeguard by a single vote.⁵⁹

However, in 1973, when the Safeguard ABM site to protect Minuteman ICBMs was nearing completion in North Dakota, Congress refused to authorize funds to commence building the second ABM site to protect Washington.⁶⁰ As Safeguard was designed for the two sites to support each other, and would be much less effective without the Washington ABM site, even Senator Jackson, a Safeguard proponent, gave up after this defeat.⁶¹

In 1974, Congress directed the Defense Department to reorient the ABM program to research and development of future ABM systems, but not to test prototypes.⁶² The Safeguard ABM site at Grand Forks became fully operational in October 1975, but was deactivated soon after due to its limited capabilities resulting from the absence of the planned second site near Washington.⁶³

The Safeguard experience discredited strategic missile defense as a theoretical and practical enterprise in Congress. In 1979, the Congressional Research Service (CRS), an arm of the legislative branch that endeavors to be carefully nonpartisan in its work, recommended in a major report to Congress that strategic missile defenses are destabilizing. According to the CRS report—endorsed by the House International Relations Committee—even research and development of ABM systems could prove destabilizing, especially if successful because “[t]oo much success could lead to Soviet misperceptions of U.S. intentions.” The report continued,

In the United States strategic defense has been disparaged by many who see the technology to defend military forces, industry, and especially population, as hopelessly inadequate to support its assigned missions in the face of an overwhelming offense. This attitude in some ways

complements another position: defense could upset deterrence, cause an endless and unprecedently perilous arms race, and invite nuclear war.

The current policy of strong offensive and negligible defensive forces draws on both these perceptions. ...Deterrence...is thought to require mutual vulnerability: If a nation thought it could protect its population, it would be less deterred from attacking preemptively, especially in a crisis. ...Positive results can be expected from R&D in strategic defensive systems. ...Too much success could lead to Soviet misperceptions of U.S. intentions.⁶⁴

MX ICBM

The MX (for “Missile Experimental,” later dubbed the “Peacekeeper”) was an advanced ICBM with extremely high accuracy (reportedly a CEP—circular error probable—of 300 feet) and a payload of 10 warheads, each of relatively high yield (reportedly 300 kilotons). The accuracy-yield combination of the MX gave it an excellent capability to destroy hard targets, perform counterforce missions, and limit collateral damage to the civil population in the limited strategic operations envisioned by NSDM 242 and PD 59. As an ICBM, the MX could be rapidly retargeted, would be promptly responsive to commands, and had the most redundant and most robust communications for carrying out flexible nuclear options or for waging protracted nuclear war—if deployed in a survivable basing mode. MIRVs enhanced the deterrent value of the MX by enabling every missile surviving a Soviet first strike to retaliate against multiple targets, or to penetrate Soviet missile defenses by concentrating warheads against protected targets.⁶⁵

However, many in Congress objected that MX looked like a first-strike weapon that would destabilize the strategic balance. Others argued that MX would invite a first strike because it was a high-value target that, when based in silos, would be vulnerable to

Soviet attack. Congress dedicated numerous hearings specifically to stopping the MX, inviting panels of witnesses and groups opposed to the missile.⁶⁶

In 1976, Congress refused to fund a silo-based MX system on grounds of vulnerability, halting the program until a survivable basing mode could be found. At least 30 alternative basing modes were considered. In 1979, faced with a growing Soviet threat to the survival of U.S. ICBMs, President Carter persuaded Congress to authorize development of a survivable basing mode of multiple protected shelters for a mobile MX. Controversy in Congress over MX and its basing mode continued to delay deployment of the missile until 1986. Knowing that Congress had rejected 200 MX missiles under President Carter, the Reagan administration reduced the number of missiles from 200 to 100 in 1981 in its then-classified National Security Decision Directive 12. Almost two years later, the Reagan administration's Scowcroft Commission proposed 100 MX missiles to Congress, which Congress further reduced to 50.⁶⁷

Minuteman IIIA ICBM

The Minuteman IIIA was an upgraded version of the Minuteman III ICBM that achieved initial operating capability in 1970 and was fully operational by July 1976. Even as Minuteman III was being deployed, much of the force was given improved guidance systems and more powerful warheads. The improved accuracy-yield combination on Minuteman IIIA resulted in much improved, but still only moderately effective, counterforce capabilities. At the same time as the Minuteman IIIA upgrades were under way, the entire ICBM force was retrofitted with a Command Data Buffer system that greatly improved retargeting capability and command-and-control flexibility, consistent with the requirements of NSDM 242 and PD 59.⁶⁸

Many in Congress complained about Minuteman IIIA moving in a destabilizing direction, like the MX. But Congress made no major effort to stop or slow Minuteman IIIA by, for example, eliminating funding for the upgrades, apparently because Minuteman IIIA was not an entirely new missile program, but only an improvement of an already existing missile system. The significance of the highly technical upgrades were not widely publicized or understood in the Congress, nor did the Minuteman IIIA become a silo-killing “first strike” instrument as a result of the improvements. Consequently, Minuteman IIIA became the strategic program deployed in the 1970s that came closest to realizing the requirements for flexibility, responsiveness, and improved prompt counterforce capabilities required by sufficiency, NSDM 242, and PD 59. However, the Minuteman IIIA was far from ideal for these purposes, especially for counterforce missions, offering less than a 20 percent single-shot kill probability against Soviet missile silos, and much less against deeply buried command centers.⁶⁹

Trident I and II SLBMs

The Trident I (C4) SLBM was MIRVed with eight warheads, each reportedly of 100 kilotons yield, which it could deliver to much greater range than its Polaris and Poseidon predecessors. Trident I, like the Polaris and Poseidon SLBMs, lacked the accuracy-yield combination necessary to attack hard targets. The Trident II (D5) SLBM, still under development in the late 1970s, would offer accuracy and yield sufficient to attack hard targets.⁷⁰

During the 1970s, the Department of Defense and many in Congress shared a growing concern about the long-term survivability of the range-limited Polaris and Poseidon SLBMs in the face of increasing numbers of Soviet attack submarines and more

sophisticated Soviet anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capabilities. Congressional hearings explored the threat to Polaris and Poseidon submarines that, because of the limited range of their missiles, were also limited in the size of their oceanic patrol areas and firing areas where they could hide and still cover targets deep in the Soviet Union. The fear was that the Soviets might eventually be able to surge enough attack submarines into Polaris and Poseidon patrol areas, or achieve a breakthrough in ASW technology, that would threaten U.S. ballistic missile submarines, the most survivable and most important leg of the U.S. strategic triad.⁷¹

The longer range of Trident I greatly increased the “hiding space” for the submarines that carried the missile, while still allowing the SLBM to reach targets within the USSR. The Trident I accuracy-yield combination imparted virtually no counterforce capability against Soviet hard targets, so the missile posed no threat to strategic stability under the arms control theory so influential in Congress, but was capable of destroying urban-industrial targets for the purpose of assured destruction.⁷²

Thus, Trident I was virtually the perfect strategic weapon from the point of view of the 1970s Congress. Congressional opponents of Safeguard and the MX missile almost universally supported Trident I.⁷³

However, arms control trumped even the Trident I in the early 1970s, when a majority in Congress gave greater weight to strategic arms limitation talks than to a strategic weapon system viewed as eminently stabilizing. In response to a June 1973 announcement by President Nixon and Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev that a deadline for reaching a permanent agreement on limiting strategic offensive arms was set for 1974, the Senate Armed Services Committee denied the administration’s request for funding

accelerated development of Trident I. In July, Senator Thomas McIntyre, chairman of the SASC Research and Development Subcommittee, with unanimous consent, cut funding for Trident I from \$1.7 billion to \$885 million. Chairman McIntyre explained that, with a strategic treaty impending that would probably limit missile submarines, there was “good reason not to rush ahead” with Trident I. However, the Senate Armed Services Committee as a whole restored the cuts.⁷⁴ The Nixon administration’s planned initial deployment of Trident I nonetheless was delayed by two years, until 1979.

By the late 1970s, Trident I enjoyed almost universal support in Congress because of the growing Soviet threat to the survivability of the ICBM and bombers legs of the U.S. strategic triad. Moreover, by 1979 the USSR had deployed many more nuclear attack submarines than the United States, lending credence to earlier concerns about the potential vulnerability of Polaris and Poseidon ballistic missile submarines.⁷⁵

During the 1970s, congressional assent to Trident I did not as warmly embrace Trident II, despite the latter’s greater range and survivability, because the improved missile also had the capability to destroy hard targets. Although Congress by the late 1970s was more evenly divided over the wisdom of arms control and the necessity of upgrading U.S. strategic capabilities to meet the Soviet counterforce threat, those opposed to nuclear “war fighting” could still command a majority. A landmark 1979 report mandated by Congress and prepared by the Congressional Research Service—an organization always careful to reflect mainstream congressional views—warned that accurate SLBMs like the Trident II could be destabilizing. According to the CRS report, even giving “SLBMs a limited capability against some hardened targets...would significantly affect stability, as current accuracy makes SLBMs retaliatory, not

counterforce, weapons.”⁷⁶ Some in Congress opposed even the early-1970s development program for Trident II.⁷⁷ However, as shall be seen in the next paper in this series that treats the 1980s, the Trident II would enjoy strong support, despite its hard-target capability, from some of the same congressional leaders who opposed the MX ICBM as destabilizing. The longer range of Trident II made the missile more survivable than Trident I, by giving submarines with Trident II larger patrol areas, while the land-based MX ICBM—MIRVed, highly accurate, and potentially vulnerable—could be both provocative and an inviting target. Nonetheless, congressional opposition would help delay initial deployment of the hard-target Trident II SLBM until 1990.

B-1 Bomber

The B-1 was canceled and revived over its lengthy development history, as strategy, along with the role of bombers, shifted from stressing flexibility to emphasizing assured destruction and back again. President Nixon reestablished a supersonic bomber program in his first term, getting Congress to support starting production of four B-1s for testing in 1970.

Concerns about whether aging B-52s could survive a Soviet first strike and penetrate rapidly modernizing Soviet air defenses chiefly motivated supporters of the B-1 bomber. During the 1960s, Congress argued that bombers were the most important part of the triad because, unlike missiles, they could be recalled, more credibly used for “nuclear diplomacy,” and offered strategic flexibility, including the ability to execute limited strategic operations.⁷⁸ All of these arguments were resurrected on behalf of the B-1 by a still-powerful congressional faction, led by Representatives Robert Dornan and

Robert Sikes, some of whom remembered bitterly the cancellation of the B-70 supersonic bomber in the 1960s.⁷⁹

On the other side, Senator William Proxmire led the fight against the B-1. Senator Proxmire continually derided the B-1 as an outlandishly expensive dinosaur, obsolete in an era of nuclear missiles. Numerous congressional hearings were dedicated to derailing the B-1 as too costly and unnecessary for assured destruction.⁸⁰

Presidents Nixon and Ford and their congressional allies slowly pushed forward B-1 development against strong congressional opposition. President Nixon planned to build 240 B-1s with the initial deployment of the aircraft scheduled for 1979. But by 1976, President Ford had achieved, with difficulty, only four B-1s for testing.⁸¹ In May of that year, the Senate passed an amendment proposed by Senator John Culver that surprised the Ford administration by denying funding to begin production of the B-1 until February 1, 1977, after the presidential election.⁸²

During the 1976 presidential campaign, Jimmy Carter ran against the B-1, targeting the aircraft as an example of wasteful military spending. President Carter on June 30, 1977 announced cancellation of the bomber, in favor of retrofitting B-52s with the newly developed air-launched cruise missile (ALCM).⁸³

ALCM

In February 1974, the Air Force began development of the ALCM, a subsonic cruise missile with a terrain-matching guidance system that enabled the missile to maneuver around Soviet air defenses, fly at low altitudes below radar, and strike with high accuracy. Development of the ALCM was greatly accelerated after President Carter canceled the B-1 penetrating bomber and instead opted for B-52s armed with the missile.

One B-52 could carry up to 20 ALCMs and fire the weapons from a standoff distance without the bomber having to penetrate Soviet air defenses. The relatively low radar cross section of the ALCM and sheer numbers would enable the missiles to overwhelm those defenses. ALCMs were first deployed in 1980.⁸⁴

High accuracy gave the ALCM the capability to destroy hard targets. But because it was delivered by the subsonic B-52, and was itself a “slow flyer,” the ALCM posed no first-strike threat to Soviet strategic forces, a point emphasized by the Carter NSC staff in its Arms Control Impact Statement submitted to Congress and by the Congressional Research Service evaluation of that ACIS.⁸⁵

Congressional objections were raised to ALCM because Moscow complained that the missile was not limited by SALT II, then being negotiated, and thus threatened agreement on a treaty. However, SALT II was modified to include ALCM limits, eliminating this objection.⁸⁶

ALCM enjoyed broad support in Congress because of its compliance with arms control principles related to strategic stability, and not least because it was inexpensive, in comparison to other strategic systems. Congressional opponents of the B-1 bomber strongly advocated the ALCM as an alternative.⁸⁷

Neutron Bomb

Although the “neutron bomb” was not part of the U.S. strategic nuclear force, it is included here because initial congressional opposition to the weapon reflected the arms control orthodoxy that nuclear weapons designed to limit unintended damage are more useable and therefore destabilizing. The strange story of the neutron bomb also reflects

the capability of both the president and the Congress to reverse themselves on important nuclear matters.

The neutron bomb was a special tactical nuclear weapon, also known as an “enhanced radiation weapon” (ERW), designed to use neutron radiation to kill Soviet bloc tank crews, while greatly constraining blast effects to limit collateral damage to allied civilian urban areas. The W70 neutron warhead for the Lance short-range missile reportedly had an explosive yield of one kiloton, about one-tenth that of most tactical nuclear weapons, and could quickly kill enemy tank crews through penetrating neutron radiation at a range of about 700 meters, or unprotected soldiers out to 900 meters. The W70 was later modified for artillery shells.⁸⁸

Strategically, the ERW was intended to bolster the credibility of the NATO nuclear deterrent to protect Western Europe from numerically superior Warsaw Pact general-purpose forces, especially armored divisions. Fear of Soviet bloc tanks overrunning Western Europe had been a nightmare scenario plaguing the United States and its European allies since the early years of the Cold War. Neutron weaponry offered the possibility of limiting nuclear war to the tactical level, perhaps containing nuclear escalation to the European theater, while reducing the collateral damage to the European allies that the United States was trying to defend. Increasing the credibility of the NATO nuclear deterrent might make its use never necessary.⁸⁹

The ERW fit well into fulfilling the need for diverse capabilities to conduct limited strategic operations and strategic flexibility. While sufficiency, NSDM 242, and PD 59 dealt almost entirely with strategic nuclear forces—and the ERW was a battlefield nuclear weapon—the ERW was consistent with the policy and strategy requirements for

limiting collateral damage and providing political leaders with credible military options in extreme circumstances.

President Carter expended enormous political capital to persuade Congress and allied leaders to agree to deployment of the neutron bomb to Europe. The strong initial opposition in Congress to the neutron bomb was led by President Carter's own party, that rejected neutron weaponry as violating the stability principles of arms control by "lowering the threshold" for nuclear employment and thereby making nuclear war more likely. However, after President Carter succeeded in winning the support of European leaders for the ERW, despite massive protests in their own countries, Congress closed ranks to support the president.⁹⁰

President Carter's hard-won congressional consensus for the neutron bomb was so strong that a last-ditch effort on August 24, 1977 by congressional opponents to stop deployment managed to muster only 31 members (5 senators and 26 representatives). Their petition to President Carter, signed by a single Republican, protested that deployment of the ERW "could lead to an escalating nuclear exchange between our country and another nuclear power, and it is unlikely that a nuclear war would remain limited."⁹¹

Consequently, President Carter stunned his supporters in Congress and NATO when, moved by protests in Europe and criticism from the congressional minority, he reversed course and in 1978 canceled plans to deploy the neutron bomb. Congress, initially opposed to the neutron bomb, now tried to rescue the program. Senator Jackson, for example, held hearings to promote production and deployment of the weapon. A majority of the House Armed Services Committee condemned President Carter's

decision. Congress voted funding to continue the program. But President Carter stood by his decision not to deploy the neutron bomb, supported by a slightly increased congressional minority of 60 members.⁹²

Arms Control

Congress and its commitment to arms control proved at least as important as executive branch policy on nuclear strategy—as enunciated in the sufficiency doctrine, NSDM 242, and PD 59—in shaping the strategic posture of the United States during the 1970s. The best proof of this is the U.S. strategic posture itself that emerged from the 1970s. That posture conformed both in broad outline and in particulars far more to arms control theory, agreements, and treaties than to the strategic requirements for damage limitation, limited strategic operations, and counterforce capabilities to achieve the strategic flexibility required by the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations.

For example, the ABM Treaty so reinforced congressional disapproval of ABM systems that it had the practical effect of abolishing strategic missile defenses from the U.S. posture, leaving the USSR with a monopoly in this area. The SALT I Interim Agreement on strategic offensive arms defined the numbers and types of strategic launchers the two sides were allowed to deploy, and was strictly obeyed by the United States. The SALT II talks commenced with the Vladivostok meeting between President Ford and Premier Leonid Brezhnev in November 1974 and continued for the rest of the decade. Congress so meticulously followed the SALT II negotiations that the talks set

parameters for the future numbers and mix of U.S. strategic forces, even in the absence of a treaty.

As has been demonstrated, Congress throughout most of the 1970s exercised its oversight powers to ensure that U.S. strategic programs conformed to arms control agreements, agreements in prospect, or merely to ensure that proposed U.S. strategic programs did not upset negotiations. Moreover, Congress preemptively used its powers against strategic programs having characteristics perceived as destabilizing under arms control theory, even if those characteristics were not prohibited by any treaty or agreement, concluded or under negotiation. Such was the priority accorded by Congress to arms control.

Thus, Congressional dedication to arms control proved at least as influential on the U.S. strategic posture as sufficiency, NSDM 242, and PD 59, as evidenced by the facts of the numbers and characteristics of U.S. strategic forces. At the end of the 1970s, U.S. strategic forces conformed rigorously to arms control agreements and theory, but were less well suited to implement the nuclear strategy described in successive presidential directives.

Not everyone in Congress was enamored of arms control, even during its halcyon years in the early 1970s. For example, Senator Sam Ervin, speaking to Secretary of Defense Laird during Senate hearings on the ABM Treaty and SALT I, warned of the treaties, “We once had superiority. And then when your predecessor...Secretary McNamara, came along, we had an equality. And now, we will accept under the ratification of these agreements an inferiority on the part of the United States.”⁹³ But this was a distinctly minority view in 1972.

Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter and their administrations bore more than a little responsibility for encouraging attitudes in Congress that undermined support for strategic programs necessary to implement their own presidential directives. The presidents themselves were proponents of arms control, though to different degrees and for different purposes. All overstated the significance of their arms control accomplishments, as when President Nixon promised the Congress that the ABM Treaty and SALT I signified “the opportunity for a new and more constructive U.S.-Soviet relationship, characterized by negotiated settlement of differences, rather than by the hostility and confrontation of the past.”⁹⁴ Moreover:

These accords offer tangible evidence that mankind need not live forever in the dark shadow of nuclear war. They provide renewed hope that men and nations working together can succeed in building a lasting peace.⁹⁵

Administrations were a house divided over arms control; the Department of Defense tried to convince Congress to support its strategic programs, while the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and the State Department both gave higher priority to arms control. Every administration tried to sell its strategic programs to Congress as “bargaining chips” to be used in negotiations with the Soviets to secure arms control treaties, which reinforced the congressional view that arms control agreements—even the arms control process—were more important than any strategic program.

When, in the late 1970s, many in Congress, perhaps a majority, saw arms control as a failure, and were alarmed by Soviet military activities in the Third World and Moscow’s pursuit of strategic superiority, arms control somehow still remained the answer.⁹⁶ Where President Nixon promised that SALT I was the path to peace, President Carter claimed that SALT II was necessary to prevent Soviet strategic superiority.

President Carter's secretary of defense, Harold Brown, promoted SALT II to arms control skeptics in Congress on the grounds that MX, Trident, and ALCM, in combination with SALT II, would preserve the strategic balance.⁹⁷

Why did Congress place so much faith in arms control? To better understand the congressional perspective, that throughout most of 1970s saw arms control as more promising and more important to U.S. national security than new nuclear strategies and strategic force programs, it may be useful briefly to review the arms control agreements entering into force or signed during the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations. A senator or representative of the 1970s, reviewing these treaties, might well conclude that the United States and USSR were on a path of convergence, that arms control was, in fact, building peace. In contrast to U.S. strategic force programs, virtually all of these arms control agreements received unanimous or overwhelming votes from Congress.⁹⁸

Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America—signed in 1967 and entering into force in 1968, was intended to prevent another Cuban missile crisis by declaring Latin America a nuclear weapons free zone.

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons—signed in 1968 and ratified by the Senate in 1969, was intended to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, to promote peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and advance further nuclear disarmament.

Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Seabed and the Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil Thereof—signed in 1971 and ratified by the Senate in 1972.

Agreement on Measures To Reduce the Risk of Outbreak of Nuclear War Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—signed in 1971, was intended to reduce the risk of accidental nuclear war by safeguards to control forces, notification of an accident, and advance notification of missile launches.

Agreement Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on Measures To Improve the USA-USSR Direct Communication Link—signed in 1971, modernized the “hot line” between the U.S. president and Soviet premier.

Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction—signed in 1972 and ratified by the Senate in 1974, was intended to abolish biological weapons.

Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM Treaty)—signed and ratified in 1972, limited U.S. and Soviet ABM systems, was represented to Congress as convergence of U.S.-Soviet strategic views and an important step toward ending the Cold War through negotiation.

Interim Agreement Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on Certain Measures With Respect to the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (SALT I Treaty)—signed in 1972, was designed to complement the ABM Treaty by limiting competition in strategic offensive arms and to provide time for further negotiations.

Agreement Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Prevention of Nuclear War—signed in 1973, outlines the general conduct of both countries toward each other and toward third countries and calls for consultation in a crisis in order to avoid nuclear war.

Protocol to the Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems—amended the 1972 ABM Treaty in 1974 to reduce the number of permitted ABM sites from two to one.

Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Underground Nuclear Weapon Tests—also known as the Threshold Test Ban Treaty (TTBT), signed in 1974, limited the yield of nuclear tests to 150 kilotons or less, in the hope of arresting the further development of future nuclear weapons.

Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on Underground Nuclear Explosions for Peaceful Purposes—signed in 1976, intended to limit the yield of nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes to 150 kilotons or less, to close a possible avenue for cheating on the TTBT.

Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques—signed in 1977 and ratified by the Senate in 1978, was intended to prevent development of future technologies that could alter the weather or geophysical environment as a weapon of war.

Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (SALT II)—signed in 1979, withdrawn by President Carter from the Senate ratification process in 1980, and never ratified, was intended to improve upon SALT I in limiting the numbers and characteristics of strategic offensive forces.

Conclusions

The balance of power between Congress and the executive branch on national security matters shifted heavily in favor of Congress, beginning in the late 1960s and continuing through the 1970s. Richard Nixon prevailed in the 1968 elections, running on a platform promising to achieve victory in the Vietnam War and to close a growing “security gap” by reestablishing U.S. military predominance over the Soviet Union. But as president he faced a hostile Congress, dominated by the political opposition, that, like the American people, was increasingly polarized against the Vietnam conflict and the Cold War. In this environment, Congress was less deferential, and even cynical, about the motives and competence of U.S. political and military leaders.

Withdrawal from Vietnam—due in part to efforts by Congress to end the war—the Watergate scandal, the resignation of President Nixon under the threat of impeachment by Congress, and the controversy over President Ford’s pardon of the disgraced Nixon, further weakened the White House and strengthened Congress. Congressional Republicans who supported the Vietnam War and the Cold War

competition with the USSR declined in credibility and power with the fall of President Nixon and under the stewardship of his successor, who was crippled by the legacy of Vietnam and Watergate.

In the strategic arena, most Democrats and Republicans in Congress favored détente with the Soviet Union and an ongoing process of arms control that would contain and manage the nuclear arms race. Détente and arms control, it was hoped, would build trust and perhaps establish a climate of normalcy between the United States and the USSR. When the promise of arms control and hopes for détente were disappointed in the late 1970s by a steady Soviet buildup of nuclear and conventional forces, an alarmed and more hawkish Congress managed to shift the blame onto President Jimmy Carter, and so retained its advantage over the executive branch in shaping the strategic posture, even while advocating different policies.

Congress in the 1970s was better equipped than in the 1960s to challenge executive branch expertise and authority on national security issues. By the 1970s, knowledge of nuclear capabilities, arms control and strategic theories, and access to classified information was more widespread among congressional staff and allies of Congress in universities, nongovernmental research centers, and activist groups. Congress enacted laws to tilt the balance of power in its own direction by, for example, requiring the executive branch to submit Arms Control Impact Statements to justify strategic programs.

The 1970s was a decade almost unprecedented in U.S. history for a Congress of such activism that it pressed its authority to the constitutional limits in order to achieve the objectives of the institution and its members. The Congress used the power of the

purse to compel a reluctant President Nixon to terminate the Vietnam War. Congress used the threat of impeachment to force Nixon's resignation, for the only time in history removing a president from power. These triumphs over the White House helped embolden Congress to seek a larger, even dominant, role in national security policy. Congress aggressively asserted its constitutionally defined oversight and budgetary prerogatives to shape the strategic posture. Moreover, within the 1970s Congress, the weakening of the seniority system and the greater diffusion of power within the House and Senate gave activist opponents of strategic nuclear programs more opportunities to advance their policy preferences, in contrast to the 1960s.

Consequently, the U.S. strategic posture that emerged from the 1970s conformed to congressional preferences influenced by arms control theories that rejected strategic missile defenses, counterforce capabilities, and limited strategic operations as dangerously destabilizing to the nuclear balance. The U.S. strategic posture in 1980 comprised forces more capable of destroying urban-industrial centers, consistent with Secretary of Defense McNamara's 1960s theory of assured destruction, than of meeting the more demanding requirements of the Schlesinger doctrine or PD 59's "countervailing strategy."

Senator Jacob Javits, at a 1979 hearing on SALT II, rightly observed that the traditional constitutional powers of Congress, aggressively used in combination with arms control, gave Congress more power than the president to shape the U.S. strategic posture. Ironically, Senator Javits was repudiating the existing strategic posture, created by Congress, as increasingly vulnerable to Soviet attack, and calling for a new strategic

posture more in line with the Schlesinger doctrine, a strategy that Congress earlier had decisively rejected:

...in connection with SALT II we can pass a resolution—which obviously cannot bind any future Congress but would certainly be adequate notice of our intentions—that we do intend to keep defense expenditures abreast with what we feel they ought to be. We can always reject the President's budget or any part of it and he is immobilized, he cannot run this Government by himself. That is the one place where we have more power than the President of the United States, the power of the purse.

Just as we were finally able to use it effectively with respect to Vietnam; so we can use it effectively with respect to this matter. It is up to us, in my judgment. We have the authority. We have the power. We have the initiative.⁹⁹

Endnotes

¹ Examples of statements of arms control theory that had influence on the 1970s Congress include Donald G. Brennan, ed., *Arms Control, Disarmament, and National Security* (New York: George Braziller, 1961); Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960); and Schelling's testimony before the House Foreign Relations Committee Subcommittee on National Security Policy and Scientific Developments, in *Strategy And Science: Toward a National Security Policy For The 1970s*, 91st Cong., 1st sess., March 18, 1969 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1969), pp. 88-162.

² For the principles of nuclear strategy enunciated by McNamara, and embraced by a majority of the Congress in the 1970s, see Robert S. McNamara, "The Dynamics of Nuclear Strategy," *Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. 57 (October 9, 1967), pp. 443-451. See also Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), p. 335.

³ Freedman, loc. cit.

⁴ Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, p. 337.

⁵ Ibid., p. 34; and Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979), pp. 202-203. On Nixon placating Congress, see also Keith B. Payne, *The Great American Gamble: Deterrence Theory And Practice From The Cold War To The Twenty-First Century* (Fairfax, Va.: National Institute Press, 2008), p. 163.

⁶ Richard M. Nixon, *United States Foreign Policy for the 1970s: Building for Peace*, Report to Congress (Washington, D.C.: The White House, February 25, 1971), pp. 53-54.

⁷ National Security Decision Directive 16, "Criteria for Strategic Sufficiency," June 24, 1969 (Top Secret; declassified February 13, 2007). See also William Burr, "The Nixon Administration, the 'Horror Strategy,' and the Search for Limited Nuclear Options, 1969-1974," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Summer 2005), pp. 34-78.

⁸ Kissinger, *The White House Years*, op. cit., pp. 202-203.

⁹ Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) Subcommittee on Arms Control, International Law, and Organization, *ABM, MIRV, SALT, And the Nuclear Arms Race*, 91st Cong., 2nd sess., April 8, 1970 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1970), p. 91.

¹⁰ On the MIRV debate, see Ted Greenwood, *Making the MIRV: A Study of Defense Decision Making* (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1975).

¹¹ SFRC, *ABM, MIRV, SALT, And The Nuclear Arms Race*, op. cit., p. 3.

¹² Ibid., p. 27.

¹³ Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, op. cit., p. 334; Richard Nixon, *U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970s: A New Strategy for Peace*, Report to Congress (Washington, D.C.: The White House, February 18, 1970); Nixon, *United States Foreign Policy for the 1970s: Building for Peace*, op. cit.; Nixon, *U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970s: The Emerging Structure of Peace*, Report to Congress (Washington, D.C.: The White House, February 9, 1972); and Nixon, *U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970s: Shaping A Durable Peace*, Report to Congress (Washington, D.C.: The White House, May 3, 1973).

¹⁴ Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), *Military Implications Of The Treaty On The Limitations Of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems And The Interim Agreement On Limitation Of Strategic Offensive Arms*, 92nd Cong., 2nd sess., July 1972 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1972), pp. 588-589.

¹⁵ William Burr, “The Nixon Administration, the ‘Horror Strategy,’ and the Search for Limited Nuclear Options, 1969-1972,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Summer 2005), pp. 34-78 and William Burr, “To Have the Only Option That of Killing 80 Million People is the Height of Immorality: The Nixon Administration, the SIOP, and the Search for Options, 1969-1974,” *National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 173*, November 23, 2005, available at <http://www.gwu.edu/-nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB173/index.htm>. The generic phrase “limited strategic options” will be used here to refer to what, in the parlance of the times, were often referred to as “limited nuclear options,” in order to avoid confusion with what later became known as “Limited Nuclear Options” (LNOs) that had a much more specific meaning. Eventually, U.S. nuclear strike plans provided for a range of options varying in scale and differentiated in other ways, including Major Attack Options (MAOs), Selected Attack Options (SAOs), Regional Nuclear Options (RNOs), and Limited Nuclear Options (LNOs). On LNOs, MAOs, and SAOs see Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger, “Policy Guidance for the Employment of Nuclear Weapons,” April 3, 1974 (Top Secret/Sensitive; declassified July 17, 2003), available at <http://www.gwu.edu/-nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB173/SIOP-25.pdf>

¹⁶ Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, op. cit., pp. 364, 376-377; and Kissinger, *The White House Years*, op. cit., p. 217. Freedman’s claim that opposition from Congress impeded progress on flexible nuclear planning is not universally reported; see Burr, “The Nixon Administration, the ‘Horror Strategy,’ and the Search for Limited Nuclear Options, 1969-1974,” op. cit.; and Terry Terriff, *The Nixon Administration and the Making of U.S. Nuclear Strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

¹⁷ National Security Decision Memorandum 242, “Policy for Planning the Employment of Nuclear Weapons,” January 17, 1974 (Top Secret/Sensitive; declassified June 27, 2007), p. 2.

¹⁸ Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, op. cit., p. 372.

¹⁹ James R. Schlesinger, *Annual Defense Report FY 1976* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, February 5, 1975), pp. II-3-II-4, II-7.

²⁰ William E. Colby, “Soviet and PRC Reactions to U.S. Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy,” August 1, 1974 (Top Secret; declassified in part, September 2004), pp. ii, iii.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. iii.

²² Some histories written prior to 2004 mistakenly claim there was no evidence of Soviet interest in limited strategic operations, because they had no access to the classified DCI report. For example, Freedman (*The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, op. cit., p. 381), unaware of the classified information available to Van Cleave, writes: “It is somewhat ironic to find an article by William Van Cleave which opened by deriding past U.S. hopes of doctrinal convergence on the basis of mutual assured destruction, and closed straining to find evidence of a serious Soviet interest in the sort of selective targeting envisaged by Schlesinger.”

²³ Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) Subcommittee on Arms Control, International Law and Organization, *Briefing On Counterforce Attacks*, 93rd Cong., 2nd sess., September 11, 1974 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1975) (Secret; declassified January 10, 1975), p. 2 (emphasis in original).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4 and passim.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 13-14.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 12.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 20.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 24.

³¹ Ibid., p. 20.

³² Ibid., p. 28.

³³ Ibid., p. 25.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 32-33.

³⁵ Presidential Directive 18, “U.S. National Strategy,” August 24, 1977 (Top Secret; declassified in part, January 6, 1992), p. 5.

³⁶ Payne, *The Great American Gamble*, op. cit., pp. 87-88, 123.

³⁷ Presidential Directive 53, “National Security Telecommunications Policy,” November 15, 1979 (unclassified), pp. 1-2.

³⁸ Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC), *Nuclear War Strategy*, 96th Cong., 2nd sess., September 16, 1980 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1981) (Top Secret; declassified, February 18, 1981), pp. 10, 16, 25, 29-30.

³⁹ Presidential Directive 59, “Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy,” July 25, 1980 (Top Secret/Sensitive; declassified in part, August 20, 1996), pp. 1,2.

⁴⁰ Brown in SFRC, *Nuclear War Strategy*, op. cit., p. 11; and Payne, *The Great American Gamble*, op. cit., p. 18.

⁴¹ See Brown’s testimony in Senate Foreign Relations Committee, *The Department of Defense Statement on Military Balance: Military Assessment*, 96th Cong., 1st sess., July 11, 1979 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1979), p. 3.

⁴² SFRC, *Nuclear War Strategy*, op. cit., pp. 4-5, 7.

⁴³ Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC), *The SALT II Treaty*, 96th Cong., 1st sess., July 11, 1979 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1979), p. 329.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 331-332.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 332.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 333.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 332-333.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 342.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Dan Caldwell, *The Dynamics of Domestic Politics and Arms Control: The SALT II Treaty Ratification Debate* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1991). For transcripts of the hearings held by the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees, see SFRC, *The SALT II*

Treaty (Parts 1-6), op. cit.; and Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), *Military Implications Of The Treaty On The Limitation Of Strategic Offensive Arms And Protocol Thereto (SALT II Treaty)*, Parts 1-4, 96th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1979).

⁵⁰ SFRC, *ABM, MIRV, SALT, And The Nuclear Arms Race*, op. cit., p. 53.

⁵¹ See, for example, *ibid.*, pp. 1-9 and passim.

⁵² Congressional Research Service (CRS), *Evaluation Of Fiscal Year 1979 Arms Control Impact Statements: Toward More Informed Congressional Participation In National Security Policymaking*, Report prepared for the Subcommittee on International Security and Scientific Affairs of the House Committee on International Relations, 95th Cong., 2nd sess., January 3, 1979 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1978), p. III.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 36. See also Senate Armed Services Committee, *Authorizing Appropriations For Fiscal Year 1979 For Military Procurement, Research And Development, Active Duty, Selected Reserve And Civil Personnel Strengths, Civil Defense, And For Other Purposes*, Senate Report 95-826, 95th Cong., 2nd sess. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, May 15, 1978), p. 83.

⁵⁴ For changed congressional threat perceptions at the end of the 1970s, see SFRC, *SALT II Treaty*, op. cit., pp. 291-292 and passim.

⁵⁵ Donald S. Bussey, *The SAFEGUARD Anti-Ballistic Missile System: Some of the Issues*, Report No. 69-145F (Washington, D.C.: Legislative Reference Service, Library of Congress, July 1, 1969), pp. 1-17; and CRS, *Evaluation Of Fiscal Year 1979 Arms Control Impact Statements*, op. cit., pp. 86-90.

⁵⁶ See, for example, the congressional reception of two ABM champions, Defense Secretary Melvin Laird and defense analyst Albert Wohlstetter, in Senate Armed Services Committee, *Fiscal Year 1971 DOD Appropriation Authorization*, Part 3, 91st Cong., 2nd sess. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1971).

⁵⁷ For the views of ABM congressional opponents, see the testimony of Abram Chayes, Jerome Wiesner, Richard Garwin, and Hans Bethe in *ibid.* For the “great debate,” see Senate Foreign Relations Committee Subcommittee on International Organization and Disarmament Affairs, *Strategic And Foreign Policy Implications Of ABM Systems*, Part 1, 91st Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1969); SFRC, *ABM, MIRV, SALT, And The Nuclear Arms Race*, op. cit., passim; and SASC, *Military Implications Of The Treaty On the Limitations Of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems*, op. cit., passim.

⁵⁸ CRS, *Evaluation Of Fiscal Year 1979 Arms Control Impact Statements*, op. cit., p. 88.

⁵⁹ William Beecher, “Report on Safeguard ABM Testimony Finds Unprofessional and Misleading Comments on Both Sides,” *New York Times*, October 1, 1971.

⁶⁰ John W. Finney, “Safeguard ABM System Incurs Costs the Army Said Would Be Avoided,” *New York Times*, July 23, 1973.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*; and CRS, *Evaluation Of Fiscal Year 1979 Arms Control Impact Statements*, op. cit., p. 90.

⁶² Ruth Currie-McDaniel and Claus R. Martel, *The U.S. Army Strategic Defense Command: Its History and Role in the Strategic Defense Initiative*, third edition (Huntsville, Ala.: Historical Office, U.S. Army Strategic Defense Command, 1989), p. 15.

⁶³ John W. Finney, “Safeguard ABM System To Shut Down: \$5 Billion Spent in 6 Years Since Debate,” *New York Times*, November 25, 1975.

⁶⁴ CRS, *Evaluation Of Fiscal Year 1979 Arms Control Impact Statements*, op. cit., p. 81.

⁶⁵ Congressional Budget Office (CBO), *Modernizing U.S. Strategic Offensive Forces: The Administration's Program and Alternatives* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Budget Office, May 1983), Table B-4, pp. 84-85; Jonathan E. Medalia, *MX, "Midgetman," and Minuteman Missile Programs* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, March 1, 1991), p. 2; Medalia, *Strategic Forces: MX ICBM* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, August 28, 1987), p. 2; and U.S. Air Force, "Peacekeeper" ICBM," fact sheet, available at <http://www.hill.af.mil/library/factsheets/factsheet.asp?fsID+5762>.

⁶⁶ See, for example, House Armed Services Committee (HASC), *Review Of U.S. Strategic Forces*, 95th Cong., 2nd sess. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1978), pp. 5, 105; and SFRC, *The SALT II Treaty*, op. cit., pp. 340-343.

⁶⁷ National Security Decision Directive 12, "Strategic Forces Modernization Program," October 1, 1981 (Secret; declassified, January 15, 2008); Medalia, *MX, "Midgetman," and Minuteman Missile Programs*, op. cit.; and Medalia, *Strategic Forces: MX ICBM*, op. cit.

⁶⁸ Medalia, *MX, "Midgetman," and Minuteman ICBM Programs*, op. cit.; *Jane's Weapon Systems 1988-89* (London: Jane's Information Group, 1989), pp. 22, 26; and "The Minuteman III ICBM," Nuclear Weapon Archive, available at <http://nuclearweaponarchive.org/Usa/Weapons/Mmiii.html>. On the counterforce capability of the Minuteman IIIA, see Dr. Peter Vincent Pry, *The Strategic Nuclear Balance: And Why It Matters* (New York: Crane Russak, 1990), pp. 212-219.

⁶⁹ Pry, *The Strategic Nuclear Balance*, op. cit., pp. 212-219.

⁷⁰ CBO, *Modernizing U.S. Strategic Offensive Forces*, op. cit., Table B-4, pp. 84-85; *Jane's Weapon Systems 1988-89*, op. cit., pp. 28-29; U.S. Navy, "Trident Fleet Ballistic Missile," Navy Fact File, January 17, 2009, available at http://www.navy.mil/navydata/fact_display.asp?cid=220&tid+1400&ct+2; "Trident I C-4 Background," available at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/systems/c-4-bkg.htm>; Pry, *The Strategic Nuclear Balance*, op. cit., pp. 198-212; and CRS, *Evaluation Of Fiscal Year 1979 Arms Control Impact Statements*, op. cit., p. 64.

⁷¹ See, for example, the testimony of Vice Adm. Hyman Rickover in House Appropriations Committee (HAC) Subcommittee on Defense, *Department Of Defense Appropriations For 1973*, Part 9, 92nd Cong., 2nd sess., May 10, 1972 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1972), pp. 12-30; and John W. Finney, "Senate Endorses Rise In Spending For Nuclear Sub," *New York Times*, July 28, 1972.

⁷² CRS, *Evaluation Of Fiscal Year 1979 Arms Control Impact Statements*, op. cit., pp. 64-65; Desmond J. Ball, "The Counterforce Potential of American SLBM Systems," *Journal of Peace Research*, No. 1 (1977), pp. 23-40; and Albert Langer, "Accurate Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles and Nuclear Strategy," *Journal of Peace Research*, No. 1 (1977), pp. 41-58.

⁷³ See, for example, HASC, *Review Of U.S. Strategic Forces*, op. cit., pp. 35, 106.

⁷⁴ John W. Finney, "Senate Unit Cuts Trident Program," *New York Times*, July 11, 1973; and Congressional Research Service (CRS), *The Trident Program* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 1973), p. 9.

⁷⁵ SFRC, *The SALT II Treaty*, op. cit., p. 324; Drew Middleton, "U.S. Held To Maintain Lead Over Soviet Strategic Arms," *New York Times*, October 3, 1977; and HAC, *Department Of Defense Appropriations For 1973*, op. cit., pp. 12-30. Congressional concerns in 1979 about delays in the Trident program prompted a Congressional Research Service report: John J. Stocker, *Delays In The Trident Submarine Program* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, August 1, 1979).

⁷⁶ CRS, *Evaluation Of Fiscal Year 1979 Arms Control Impact Statements*, op. cit., p. 42.

⁷⁷ HASC, *Review Of U.S. Strategic Forces*, op. cit., p. 5; and CRS, *The Trident Program*, op. cit., p. 4.

⁷⁸ Dagnija Sterste-Perkins, *B-1B Strategic Bomber* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, January 21, 1992), p. 2. For examples of earlier congressional arguments favoring bombers because of their strategic flexibility, see Senate Armed Services Committee and Senate Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Defense, *Military Procurement Authorizations, Fiscal Year 1966*, 89th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1965), pp. 244, 329-330. The first paper in this series, “The Role of Congress in the Strategic Posture of the United States, 1961-1969,” also emphasizes that Congress supported bombers because they were seen at the time as more reliable than early-generation ICBMs and SLBMs.

⁷⁹ Martin Tolchin, “Effort to Revive B-1 Bomber to Be Pushed in House,” *New York Times*, October 17, 1977; and John M. Collins and John Steven Chwat, *Strategic Nuclear Delivery Systems: How Many? What Combinations?* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, October 7, 1974), pp. 4-9, 43.

⁸⁰ Congressional opponents of the B-1 actively supported a “National Campaign to Stop the B-1 Bomber” through such hearings as Senate Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Defense, *Department Of Defense Appropriations For Fiscal Year 1978*, 95th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1977), pp. 162, 168-187.

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 5-6; and Marjorie Hunter, “House Blocks B-1 Production It Once Wanted,” *New York Times*, February 23, 1978.

⁸² John W. Finney, “Senate Puts Off Bomber Decision Until February,” *New York Times*, May 21, 1976. See also Richard P. Cronin, *Options Available to the President in Deciding the Future of the B-1 Bomber Program* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, December 16, 1976).

⁸³ Bernard Weinraub, “Substitute for B-1 Sought in Addition to Cruise Missile,” *New York Times*, September 20, 1977.

⁸⁴ CRS, *Evaluation Of Fiscal Year 1979 Arms Control Impact Statements*, op. cit., p. 67, 70-71.

⁸⁵ House International Relations Committee (HIRC), *Additional Arms Control Impact Statements And Evaluations For Fiscal Year 1978: Arms Control Impact Statements By The National Security Council Together With Evaluations Prepared By The Congressional Research Service On W-70 Mod 3 (Lance) Warhead [and] Air-Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM) 1978 Supplemental Authorization*, Committee Print, 95th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, December 1, 1977), p. 20.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 19; CRS, *Evaluation Of Fiscal Year 1979 Arms Control Impact Statements*, op. cit., pp. 72-73; Alexander R. Vershbow, “The Cruise Missile: The End of Arms Control?,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (October 1976), p. 145; and Richard Burt, “Major Concessions by U.S. and Soviets on Arms Reported,” *New York Times*, October 11, 1977.

⁸⁷ Weinraub, “Substitute for B-1 Sought in Addition to Cruise Missile,” op. cit.

⁸⁸ Thomas B. Cochrane, William M. Arkin, and Milton M. Hoenig, *Nuclear Weapons Databook: U.S. Nuclear Forces and Capabilities*, Vol. I (Cambridge, Mass.: Natural Resources Defense Council, Ballinger Publishing, 1984), pp. 28-29; HIRC, *Additional Arms Control Impact Statements And Evaluations For Fiscal Year 1978*, op. cit., pp. 1-13; Richard P. Cronin and Robert G. Bell, *Enhanced Radiation Weapons: The “Neutron Bomb,”* Issue Brief Number IB78085 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, October 19, 1978), pp. 1-4; and Jonathan E. Medalia, *Enhanced Radiation Weapons: A Chronology* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 1977).

⁸⁹ Sam Cohen, *The Truth About the Neutron Bomb* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1983), *passim*.

⁹⁰ Bernard Weinraub, “Funds Backed for Neutron Bomb As House Rebuffs Weiss on Ban,” *New York Times*, September 30, 1977.

⁹¹ (UPI) “31 In Congress Ask Halt In Making Neutron Bomb,” *New York Times*, August 25, 1977.

⁹² Richard Burt, “Pressure From Congress Mounts To Reverse Ban on Neutron Bomb,” *New York Times*, April 6, 1978.

⁹³ SASC, *Military Implications Of The Treaty On The Limitation Of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems*, op. cit., p. 48.

⁹⁴ Nixon’s letter of transmittal to the Senate accompanying the ABM Treaty and Interim Agreement, in *ibid.*, p. v.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. vi.

⁹⁶ For an example of the congressional view that arms control had contributed to U.S. ICBM vulnerability and Soviet escalation dominance, see HASC, *Review Of U.S. Strategic Forces*, op. cit., pp. 95-96.

⁹⁷ SFRC, *The SALT II Treaty*, op. cit., pp. 292-293, 302; Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC), *The SALT II Treaty*, Part 5, 96th Cong., 1st sess., September 1979 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1979), pp. 88-89; and SASC, *Military Implications Of The Treaty On The Limitation Of Strategic Offensive Arms And Protocol Thereto (SALT II Treaty)*, op. cit., pp. 12-22.

⁹⁸ The treaties that follow are described, including their purpose, negotiating history, and full text, in U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *Arms Control and Disarmament Agreements: Texts and Histories of Negotiation* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, 1982), *passim*.

⁹⁹ SFRC, *The SALT II Treaty*, Part 5, op. cit., pp. 122-123.